



# News Release

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## **STATE PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER ANNOUNCES MORE CALIFORNIANS ELIGIBLE FOR FLU VACCINE** *Vaccinating High-Risk Individuals Is Still A Priority*

SACRAMENTO – Urging all eligible Californians to get a flu shot, State Public Health Officer Dr. Richard Joseph Jackson today announced that the state has expanded the list of individuals eligible to receive a flu shot to include all adults age 50 and older, emergency service workers and individuals who have regular contact with persons at high risk for serious complications from the flu.

“While our first priority continues to be ensuring the availability of flu shots for seniors and those at highest risk for complications from the flu, we have the opportunity to vaccinate more people. Eligible Californians should not wait; they should seek a flu immunization as soon as possible,” Jackson said. “Now is the time to vaccinate against the flu. Flu season in California typically peaks around Christmas and continues through the early months of the new year.”

A Public Health Order issued by Jackson in October directed health care providers to reserve flu vaccine for seniors and other priority groups because of a nationwide shortage of the vaccine. The order has now been amended to include these three additional priority groups that have in previous years been recommended to receive flu vaccine by the federal Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices.

“Some individuals who are eligible for a flu shot may have decided not to get one this year because of limited supplies early in the season,” Jackson said. “Flu vaccine is available for providers to order for their eligible patients.”

The California Department of Health Services (CDHS) has been working closely with local health departments and medical providers to ensure that those in greatest need are able to receive flu vaccine. CDHS has shipped more than 821,600 doses to local health departments for distribution. In addition, private providers have recently ordered 369,910 doses from a state allotment of 538,430. More vaccine will be available next month.

Jackson encouraged individuals in the following groups, or their parents or caretakers, to contact their health care provider or local health department about obtaining a flu shot:

- All children ages 6-23 months.
- All adults 50 years of age and older.
- Individuals ages 2-64 with underlying chronic medical conditions.
- All women who will be pregnant during influenza season.
- Residents of nursing homes and long-term care facilities.

- Children 6 months to 18 years of age receiving chronic aspirin therapy.
- Household contacts of persons belonging to any of the priority groups listed above.
- Out-of-home caregivers and household contacts of children less than 6 months of age.
- Healthcare workers involved with direct patient care.
- Emergency service workers, such as law enforcement, firefighters and paramedics.

Individuals ages 5 to 49 who are not pregnant and do not have chronic medical conditions are encouraged to obtain FluMist, the nasal spray flu vaccine. FluMist is available through many major pharmacy chains. To find a location that offers FluMist, call 1-866-592-4381 between 5:30 a.m. and 2 p.m. or visit [www.findfluvaccine.org](http://www.findfluvaccine.org). After locating a pharmacy with FluMist, consumers should always phone first to ensure that FluMist is available and ask if an appointment is needed to obtain the vaccine.

In addition, Jackson encouraged all Californians to take the following steps to help prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses:

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Properly dispose of used tissues.
- Wash your hands with soap and warm water or a hand sanitizer to help protect yourself from germs and avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Stay healthy by eating nutritious foods, drinking plenty of water, exercising, getting plenty of rest and not smoking.
- Stay home when you are sick to avoid infecting your co-workers and friends.

For more information about influenza and the influenza vaccine, please visit the CDHS Web site at [www.dhs.ca.gov](http://www.dhs.ca.gov) or call the toll-free Flu Vaccine Information Line at 866-470-3788 for a prerecorded message with the latest information about the availability of influenza vaccine in California. In addition, the public can call the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's toll-free flu information line 24 hours a day at 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636) with questions in both English and Spanish about influenza and the vaccine shortage.